

Gardner-Webb University Utilizes CRF to Safely Bring Students Back to Campus

Gardner-Webb University, located in Boiling Springs, NC, is grateful for the assistance that was made possible by the NC COVID19 Relief Aid. With the onset of the pandemic occurring during the middle of our spring 2020 semester, the University was desperately trying to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Gardner-Webb moved its academic sessions to a virtual platform, but we have maintained a student population on campus throughout the entire pandemic. As you will see in our detailed listings, our administrators did an amazing job utilizing multiple outlets to purchase items needed to keep our campus, faculty, staff, and students safe during the first few weeks of the pandemic.

Gardner-Webb University was committed to successfully bringing our students back into a face-to-face class setting by the end of the summer. This decision led our team to develop procedures and seek out resources to protect the health and safety of our faculty, staff, students, and visitors. Plans were developed in consultation with the Cleveland County Health Department, Atrium Health Care (GWU Student clinic provider), and following guidelines set forth by the NCDHHS and CDC organizations. In late July of 2020, the University welcomed students back to face-to-face classes for a traditional second session of summer school.

In order to bring students back to classes, we surveyed all of campus to help determine class size limits in order to keep students socially distant while in class. The University purchased and installed plexiglass dividers in all academic classrooms (approximately 50), in all retail establishments (approximately 12), and in all customer service areas (10). We also provided disinfectant for every classroom that was to be used before and after each class. Additionally, the University placed hand sanitizer at every entry and exit into the academic and administrative buildings on campus as well as in many offices on campus. Cleaning measures for all the interior spaces on campus were increased to include a 7-day per week operation, including disinfecting all high touch surfaces multiple times per day.

In keeping our faculty, staff and students' health and safety as the highest priority, we were able to purchase fans with ion sensors for several of the University's larger spaces utilized by our student athletes and those students wishing to maintain their healthy lifestyle through our workout facilities. These fans increase the air circulation in the space and the air is "scrubbed" by the ion sensors as the air passes over the blades. We also purchased electrostatic sprayers and have issued one to every housekeeper on campus. These sprayers have also been issued to our athletic training staff, athletic team managers, and our wellness training staff. Gardner-Webb has maintained our in-person dining areas, as allowed by Governor Cooper's Executive Order, which include dedicated staff to disinfecting equipment and tables between each use. When the pandemic guidelines shifted to the mandatory wearing of masks, so did our efforts to provide a variety of mask to accommodate our community's needs such as disposable masks, cloth masks, and clear shields to assist in protecting our 450+ employees and nearly 1,200 on-campus students.

The University's College of Health Sciences and their students benefited greatly through the ability to purchase PPE for approximately 245 students in the physician assistant studies program and pre-licensure nursing programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. A portion of the funding was utilized to purchase a Fit-Test Kit, to ensure our students' proper respiratory protection, which allowed students to continue in the clinical setting. PPE requirements remain ever-changing, health system-dependent, and have increased significantly since mid-2020. Healthcare systems have placed PPE provisions on educational institutions rather than individual students. This funding has made it possible for our healthcare students to continue and, in many cases, graduate as expected and begin working in a healthcare setting, despite the pandemic's negative impacts.



Gardner-Webb University has made great strides in keeping our family safe throughout this pandemic. In this report we have mentioned just a few of the PPE items that were purchased. Other items include face shields, goggles, disinfectant wipes, microfiber cloths and protective clothing. We have experienced challenges, and even setbacks, but with the assistance of these funds, the University has been able to successfully identify and purchase the needed products to protect our campus community.

